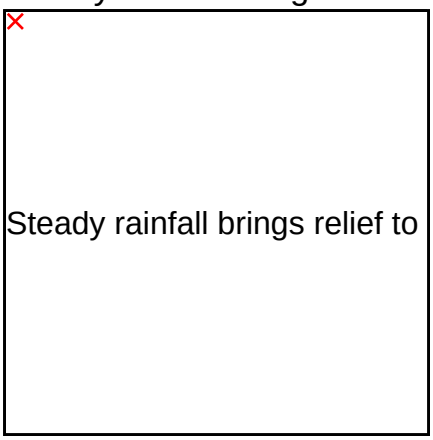
Steady rainfall brings relief to local river basins



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SEATTLE--This is the lowest April snowpack on record in the Green River Basin according to a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' snow survey, which was conducted April 4.

The snowpack typically peaks April 1; so this survey indicates that the Corps cannot expect a significant amount of snowmelt contribution into Howard Hanson Dam's reservoir, which is located on the Green River.

The Corps determined that the Green River Basin is only at 13 percent of average snowpack. This means the Howard Hanson reservoir will depend on the rainfall for refill this spring.

Due to the increased amount of rain over the past few weeks, the Corps anticipates filling Howard Hanson no later than May. The Corps releases water from the Howard Hanson reservoir in the summer and fall to augment streamflow in the Green River to benefit fish.

The Corps also regulates the level of Lake Washington with the Hiram M. Chittenden Locks and dam in Ballard.

The Corps of Engineers has halted conservation measures, which began in March at the Locks, based on watershed conditions and forecasts. The Corps has reopened the saltwater drain, provided flows for steelhead attraction and is meeting lake elevation targets. Lake Washington is on track to reach its target spring level of 22 feet this year.

Because the Lake Washington basin is mostly a rain driven system, precipitation during the early part of the spring refill period is critical to ensuring the Corps' ability to meet water needs through the rest of the year. If the region sees less than normal rain in April or May, conservation measures may be used.

Boaters and lake dwellers are encouraged to monitor Lake Washington's elevation any time on the Internet at http://www.nws.usace.army.mil, by clicking on the Lake and river level information link under "Links of Interest." The site provides current elevation information as well as a graph of Lake Washington's average elevation throughout the year. For information about conservation in the Seattle area click on: http://www.savingwater.org